

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 072 626

EM 010 711

AUTHOR Freed, Michele
TITLE Foreign Student Evaluation of a Computer-Assisted Instruction Punctuation Course. Technical Memo 6.
INSTITUTION Texas Univ., Austin. Computer-Assisted Instruction Lab.
SPONS AGENCY National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO TM-6
PUB DATE Oct 71
NOTE 11p.

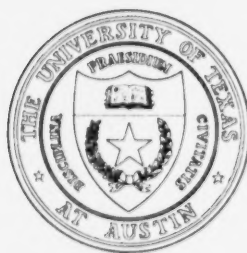
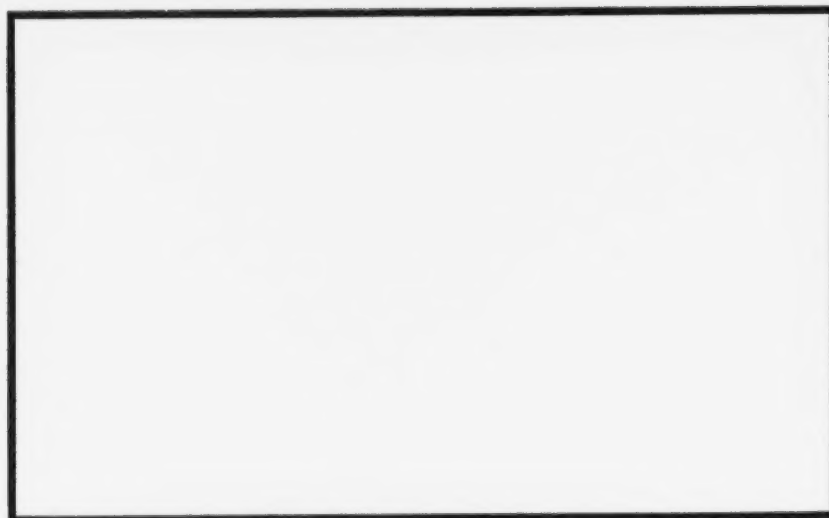
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Computer Assisted Instruction; *English (Second Language); *English Instruction; Higher Education; *Language Programs; Program Evaluation; *Punctuation; Teaching Techniques; Undergraduate Study

IDENTIFIERS *PUNCT

ABSTRACT

PUNCT, a computer-assisted instruction (CAI) course dealing with punctuation and usage was designed as a review course for college freshmen English students at the University of Texas. In 1971 forty foreign students registered to take PUNCT. This report summarizes the foreign students' reactions to the course, their suggestions for improving and expanding PUNCT, their experiences in the laboratory, and their progress in the course as revealed by personal interviews and computer user data files. The data indicate that foreign students can substantially improve their test performances in a short amount of time using this course. (MC)

ED 072626



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
Computer Assisted Instruction Laboratory
AUSTIN

111
222
333
444
555
666
777
888
999
000
111
222
333
444
555
666
777
888
999
000

ED 072626

FOREIGN STUDENT EVALUATION OF
A COMPUTER-ASSISTED INSTRUCTION
PUNCTUATION COURSE

TECHNICAL MEMO NO. 6

Michele Freed

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIG-
INATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPIN-
IONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY
REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDU-
CATION POSITION OR POLICY

October 1971

Supported By:

THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
Grant GJ 509 X

*The University of Texas at Austin
Computer-Assisted Instruction Laboratory
Austin, Texas 78712*

PUNCT, a computer-assisted instruction (CAI) course (Freed, 1970) dealing with punctuation and usage, was designed as a review course for college freshman English students. However, in the spring semester of 1971, at the request of three teachers of foreign students at The University of Texas at Austin, 40 foreign students registered to take PUNCT. This report summarizes the students' reactions to the course, their suggestions for improving and expanding PUNCT, their experiences in the Laboratory, and their progress in the course as revealed by personal interviews and the computer user data files.

Seventeen of the students were registered for English 301Q, a course in English for foreign students given by the English Department. These students were enrolled at the University. The other 23 students were enrolled in an intensive English class offered by the International Office to students prior to admission to the University. Because of the diverse backgrounds of the students involved in the program, classroom study of the topics covered by PUNCT proved to be tedious and unsatisfactory. Some students had little English preparation in their native countries while others had studied English throughout their formal education. PUNCT offered a self-paced and individualized means of covering the topics of punctuation and usage. The need for self-paced instruction was obvious in the data which revealed that some students required as few as eight hours to complete the course, while other students needed as many as 24 hours.

Each student had a personal interview when he completed the course or near the end of the semester if he did not complete the course. Since PUNCT was not written with foreign speakers in mind, necessary modifications became apparent in these discussions. The most extensive modification needed involved the alteration of the vocabulary used in the instructional sequences and the sentences used for examples, exercises, and tests. Words that are familiar to almost any native speaker are not always in the foreign student's vocabulary (e.g., pitcher, grabbed). Other words used are perhaps too difficult for either the native speaker or the foreign student (e.g., rhetoric, squall). The sentences could be revised using vocabulary selected from textbooks which teach English as a second language. An effort should be made to explain technical terminology when it must be used and to avoid it whenever possible. Since PUNCT was not designed to build or test vocabulary, it is important that vocabulary not be an obstacle for teaching punctuation and usage. Some students blamed errors on their not understanding the vocabulary used in the program; however, others felt that contextual clues eliminated the problems that would occur if the student did not know the vocabulary. This suggested change in vocabulary would be difficult to implement in PUNCT, but the modification could be made in PUNCT2-APL (Freed & Bunderson, in preparation).

A common criticism of the course structure is that the unit on commas is too long to be taken as a whole. This unit consists of segments 20, 21, 22, and 23. When taking shorter one-segment units, the student

feels a sense of accomplishment as he completes each unit. If comma instruction were broken down into smaller units, the student would have the option to intersperse other units of instruction between portions of comma instruction. As the course is now organized, the slower student worked from eight to twelve hours on commas with no diversion. He often became frustrated because he was unable to finish the unit.

Only one segment was mentioned by the students when they were asked if the instruction was confusing; the confusing instruction deals with the direct quotation. The unit focuses on seldom-used constructions which the student may or may not have the opportunity to use. The more common constructions should be isolated for instruction for the foreign students. Another area in which the instruction is obviously not important for a student at this level is the unit on possessive compound nouns (e.g., sisters-in-law's).

In the interviews students were asked to suggest additional topics that they would like to see included in a CAI English course. A number of students recommended that the course be expanded to include instruction on verbs (regular, irregular, tense, etc.). Some suggested that the course emphasize modern vocabulary and idioms, while other students suggested topics such as grammar, verbal phrases, and introductory phrases.

A large number of students expressed the desire for more student control. They wanted to be able to go back and review completed units or leave a unit, such as commas, and return to it at a later time.

Many students, however, did not seem to understand or use all of the available control options. The course was arranged so that the student who failed the posttest twice proceeded to the next pretest. Some students complained that they preferred not to advance until they could pass the test. This comment was particularly interesting since the course was originally designed so that a student would not advance until he had passed the posttest. However, a number of native speakers complained that if they could not pass the test after two attempts, they would not like to be kept in an indefinite loop. The students had little or no trouble for the most part adjusting to using the terminal equipment and all found the proctors helpful when they needed further explanations or additional help.

The students were particularly interested in taking a computer course. All of the students except two started the course with a favorable attitude and 88% completed the course with a favorable attitude. This group felt that taking the course was a positive experience and almost all said that they would have attended regularly even if the computer course had not been a class requirement. Eighty percent of the students said that they would recommend the course to friends and a number of these students brought friends with them to the Laboratory.

Of 30 students interviewed, 50% thought that the course was of great benefit to them, and another 40% felt that it was helpful in some areas. One student felt it was no help and two were uncertain about its value.

The students felt relaxed in the Laboratory, found the proctors helpful, and had little trouble scheduling, although many said that they would have worked on the weekends if time had been available.

The pretest and first attempt at the posttest performance scores (% correct) of the foreign students is summarized in Table 1. The total number of students differed from the number taking the pretest and the posttest because those students who passed the pretest did not take the following instruction and posttest. Some students (those who knew that they needed the instructional sequence on a unit) did not take the pretest but did take the posttest. Their scores (which would presumably be low) have not been included in the percentages for the pretest, but have been included in the posttest.

There are no data as to the reliability of the tests. The tests were embedded in the instruction and different tests were used to measure pre- and post-instructional performance; it is not certain that the items were of equal difficulty. Data were not available for five units. On all other units there was improvement from pre- to posttest performance. This improvement varied from 15 to 80%. These data indicate that foreign students can substantially improve their test performances in a short amount of time.

The experience was a profitable one for the CAI Laboratory and the foreign students. During the following semester more foreign students were enrolled for the course at their instructors' request. Because of other commitments, the Laboratory personnel did not have the opportunity to interview these students or evaluate their performances. However, their

Table 1
PUNCT Pretest and Posttest Scores

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Total No. of Students</u>	<u>No. of Students Taking Both Pretest & Posttest</u>	<u>Percent Correct</u>	
			<u>Pretest*</u>	<u>Posttest*</u>
Commas :				
Dates and addresses	40	39	57	82
Interjections	34	26	56	77
Series		Data not available		
Appositives	31	14	59	85
Clauses of feeling or opinion	34	21	54	94
Introductory adverbial clauses	23	8	50	65
Introductory adverbs	31	25	9	88
Introductory prepositional phrases	27	11	58	85
Introductory verbals, verbal phrases	32	8	61	81
Coordinate adjectives	31	23	26	57
Non-essential clauses	25	13	48	98
Commas and colons	30	24	72	90
Commas, dashes, colons		Data not available		
Commas, semicolons	26	10	53	89
Apostrophes:				
Possessives	14	12	45	61
Contractions	14	6	71	94
Compound possessives	13	12	70	98
Quotations:				
Direct	20	19	19	57
Within a sentence	20	20	36	66
Short direct	17	17	42	61
With final punctuation	15	15	69	90

*Scores presented are only for those students taking both pre- and posttest.

Table 1 continued

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Total No. of Students</u>	<u>No. of Students Taking Both Pretest & Posttest</u>	<u>Pretest*</u>	<u>Posttest*</u>
Capitalization	19	18	70	85
Pronouns:				
Case	13	12	31	85
Interrogative and relative	13	11	50	80
In comparisons	12	8	42	67
With verbals	12	4	25	75
Reflexive and intensive	12	5	50	85
With compound antecedent	9	3	50	83
Subject-verb agreement:				
Unit 1	16	8	13	65
Unit 2	16	4	13	88
Unit 3	15	5	20	100
Modifiers:				
Adjectives and adverbs	11	7	7	65
Comparative and superlative		Data not available		
Misplaced prepositional phrases		Data not available		
Misplaced verbals		Data not available		

*Scores presented are only for those students taking both pre- and posttest.

instructors were confident that these students would benefit as earlier students had and required students to attend; they were pleased with the students' progress. The Laboratory was able to see how positively motivated students reacted to the course. However, for future use the course should be modified to give these students a self-paced and individualized course designed with their particular needs in mind.

REFERENCES

- Freed, Michele. Generation of punctuation and usage exercises in freshman English using a sentence pool (PUNCT2-CW). Technical Report No. 6, National Science Foundation, Grant GJ 509 X, Computer-Assisted Instruction Laboratory, The University of Texas at Austin, December 1970.
- Freed, Michele, & Bunderson, C. Victor. Development of an APL program for the generation of punctuation and usage exercises in freshman English. Technical Report No. 13, National Science Foundation, Grant GJ 509 X, Computer-Assisted Instruction Laboratory, The University of Texas at Austin, in preparation.